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THE BLYNMAN PARTY

BY

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THE BLYNMAN PARTY.

By W. FARRAND FELCH, Esq., of Hartford, Ct.

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THE Blynman party came from Wales, mainly from Monmouthshire, and very likely in the year 1640. They first appear at Plymouth and next at Marshfield (then called Green's Harbor), Massachusetts, but remained there only a short time before they removed to Gloucester. The members of Rev. Mr. Blynman's party were largely, it is supposed, members of his church, at Chepstow, Monmouthshire, before his ejection therefrom. They accompanied him over the ocean, kept with him at Marshfield, then at Gloucester, and about 1650 went with him to New London, Connecticut. They were farmers and mechanics who found Gloucester, which was then little more than a fishing station, an unfavorable place for their occupation, hence their removal to New London.

Mr. Blynman is said in history to have been accompanied to this country by "*several Welsh gentlemen of good note,*" but the date of his arrival is not known.

In the "Memoirs of the Plymouth Colony," by Hon. Francis Baylies, part 5, p. 285, under "Marshfield," we find:

"Gov. Winslow, the founder of Marshfield, often visited England; he induced several Welsh gentlemen of respectability to emigrate to America, amongst whom came the Rev. Richard Blynman, in 1642, who was the first pastor of Marshfield. Some dissensions taking place, Mr. Blynman and the Welshmen removed to Cape Anne in less than a year. In 1648 Blynman went to New London, in Connecticut, of which place he was the pastor ten years. In 1658 he was at New Haven, and soon after returned to England, after having received in 1650 an invitation to settle at Newfoundland. He died at the city of Bristol, England."

From another source I glean:

"Marshfield incorporated March 1, 1642. After the departure of Rev. Mr. Blynman, Rev. Edward Bulkeley, son of the first minister of Concord, Mass., was pastor."

THE EARLIEST DATE OF THE BLYNMAN PARTY.

The earliest notice we have of Mr. Blynman in this country is in the Plymouth records, *March 2, 1641*. This was earlier than any vessel would likely arrive that season, which makes it probable that he *came over in 1640*:

"At a General Court held in Plymouth, (Mass.) Mr. Blindman, Mr. Heugh Prychard, Mr. Obadiah Brewen, John Sadler, Heugh Cauken, and Walter Tibbott were propounded to be made free the next Court."

Plymouth Records, vol. 2, p. 8.

This is dated March 2, 1641, and is the earliest mention of the Blynman party. What is still more remarkable is that only six of the numerous party are mentioned.

Gov. Winthrop in his Diary, says:

"One Mr. Blinman, a minister in Wales, a Godly and able man, came over with some friends of his, and being invited to Green's Harbour (since Marshfield near Plymouth,) they went thither, but *ere the year was expired* there fell out some difference among them which by no means could be reconciled, so as they agreed to part, and he came with his company and sat down at Cape Anne which at this Court (*May, 1642*) was established to be a plantation and called Gloucester."

The italics in *all* cases in this article are the writer's, for a purpose which will appear soon. If they came in 1640 from Wales or England, then "*ere the year was expired*," or at all events within a year of that time, they must have removed to Gloucester. The date of their propounding as freemen of Plymouth colony is given in the Plymouth records clearly enough, "*March 2d, 1640-41*," which according to present reckoning was 1641 N.S., but early for a vessel to arrive that year from the mother country, hence they may have come in 1640; and if within a year of that time they had fallen out with the Marshfield authorities, then it follows they were in Gloucester early in 1641 N.S.

Moreover, Marshfield was incorporated in 1640. Mr. Winslow settled there himself, so it is probable he induced this Welsh party to *come over with him to help settle it*.

THE BLYNMAN PARTY IN GLOUCESTER.

It is not known, either, at what time they removed to Gloucester, but within a year, as Gov. Winthrop says. The present writer, in investigating his family records, makes the following discoveries. First, that it is just barely possible that his emigrant ancestor, Henry Feleh, senior, was a member of the Blynman party, as he is traditionally a Welshman, and also from parity of dates.

Babson's "History of Gloucester, Mass.," page 93, says:

"Henry Felch was here in 1642, and was the owner of 'six acres of hoed ground,' of which there was no grant in the record. From this fact it may be inferred that he was a settler before the incorporation of the town. He also had a house and land which he sold to James Avery He may have removed to . . . Boston, where the name is found in 1657. He had a daughter who married Samuel Haieward." . . .

"Samuel Haieward is not mentioned as an owner of land, nor in any other connection than as husband and father. His marriage with a daughter of Henry Felch, *March 2, 1641, N. S., is the earliest in the records.* His children were Samuel, born 1642, and John, 1643."

Now, Henry Felch owned his land before the incorporation of the town, which was incorporated "2d month, 1642," (or May, 1642). But in Oct., 1641, the bounds of the town were settled by the General Court: so it is probable there were settlers there that early. But Henry Felch was there prior to that time even, as there is no grant of his six acres in the town records.

It is an open question, however, whether he was in Gloucester as early as March 2d, 1641, on which date his daughter was married to Samuel Haieward or Hayward; but it is very probable that he was a resident of Gloucester at that time, from the circumstance of his daughter having been married here at that date.

But, on this very same date (March 2d, 1641), as we have already seen, Mr. Blynman and his party were propounded freemen of the Plymouth colony. Now it is just possible that if Henry Felch was a member of the Blynman colony at this time, he was with that party on that day, or they were with him; and if they were it may be that they had *already settled in Gloucester the day they were propounded as freemen of Plymouth colony.**

WHERE WERE THEY ADMITTED FREEMEN?

The Blynman party may have just landed, or may have been at Marshfield when propounded, or at Gloucester. We have already shown that they had probably just landed at Plymouth. We can now assume they could have been admitted freemen of Plymouth colony just as well if they resided at Plymouth or Marshfield. Again, it is very likely they *were* admitted freemen at about the time they arrived at Gloucester, as it was necessary for them to be made freemen before they could become townsmen to govern the town.

*Or, the six members admitted may have remained at Plymouth for that purpose, while the rest of the party may have gone on to Gloucester in advance, the six members remaining to be charged with the control of the settlement. It is not certain that the six were made freemen at the next Court (April 5th), as no mention is made in the records. But records of admission were kept loosely. It is more likely they had left Plymouth, and probably Marshfield, for Gloucester.

On May 2, 1642, some of the above mentioned persons (freemen at Plymouth) were chosen to manage the prudential affairs of Gloucester, Mass. This constituted the first board of selectmen. Now, if Henry Felch was of the Blynman party, *it is likely the party was in Gloucester before the marriage of his daughter*, March 2d, 1641. The town of Gloucester was settled some time between Oct., 1641 (when the bounds of the town were settled by the General Court), and May, 1642 (when it was established or incorporated as a plantation and called Gloucester). It is highly probable it was settled long before this, however, by the Welsh party, added to the rude fisher folk who had inhabited Cape Ann for several years prior. At the last date, May, 1642, without doubt all the Blinman party were settled at Gloucester.

WHO COMPOSED THE BLYNMAN PARTY.

It is an inquiry of some interest who composed the Welsh party that came over with Rev. Mr. Blinman. It is fair to presume that a considerable number of his fellow-passengers settled with him in a body at Cape Ann. Thither, therefore, we must follow them. On that billowy mass of rocks, that promontory so singularly bold in position and outline and so picturesque in appearance, they fixed their second encampment in this new world.

The following extract from the town records of Gloucester may indicate several of the Welshmen :

2. Mar. '42. On the first ordering and disposing of the affairs of Gloucester by Mr. Endicott and Mr. Downing, these eight were chosen to manage the prudential affairs :

“ Wm. Steevens, Wm. Addis, Mr. Milwood, Mr. Sadler, Mr. Bruen, Mr. Fryer, Mr. Norton, Walter Tybott.”

Add to these eight names, the names of Rev. Richard Blynman, Hugh Pritchard and Hugh Calkin, propounded at Plymouth at the same time with Rev. Mr. Blinman and others.

The emigrants to New London, from Gloucester, in 1650, were Christopher Avery, James Avery, Wm. Addis, Obadiah Bruen, Hugh Calkin, John Coit senior, Wm. Hough, Wm. Kenic, Andrew Lister or Lester, Wm. Meades, Ralph Parker, and Wm. Wellman.

This Cape Ann colony that removed to New London consisted of about twenty families in all. It is probable that Mr. Blinman's wife Mary, and Dorothy the wife of Thomas Parkes, were sisters ; so Parkes was very likely another of the party. In March, 1651, the principal body of these eastern emigrants arrived at New London,—among them John Coit junior, Thomas Jones, Edmund Marshall and his son John, Wm. Hough, Wm. Meades, and

James Morgan. With them also came Robert Allyn, from Salem, Mass., and Philip Tabor, from Martha's Vineyard (who very likely did not come with Blynman).

The younger Coit, the two Marshalls, and Thomas Jones, after a short residence in New London, returned to Gloucester. . . . Several other persons appeared in New London at about the same time (dates unknown and places of origin unknown) : Matthew Beckwith, John, Samuel, and Thomas Beebe, Peter Collins, George Harwood, Richard Pool and John Packer. How many and who of these, if any, came with Blynman in say 1640, it is difficult to decide ; but perhaps a long trans-Atlantic search would develop the habitat of each of the emigrants.

SOME TRANS-ATLANTIC NOTES.

The present writer took occasion, some few years ago, to conduct some researches in this direction, and secured from the then vicar at Chepstow, Monmouthshire, the following letter and notes :

Chepstow, Monmouthshire, March 29, '89.

Dear Sir:—

I have taken considerable pains to find what you want in our registers, but with only partial success. The registers go back to 1595, and as regards baptisms and funerals are perfect, though in a few instances illegible. Unfortunately, however, the marriage register is incomplete, several pages being missing after 1611.

As regards the Blynman or Blinman family we have a fairly satisfactory record, a large family having sprung from William Blinman's second marriage, among them, I suppose, being the Rev. Richard Blinman, though we have no complete record of the vicars of Chepstow, and I therefore cannot tell whether he ever occupied that position. A curious fact about William Blinman is that his eldest children were born within a very few months of his first *and* second marriages, and the record of Richard Blinman's baptism is in different coloured ink, squeezed in between other entries in the year 1607, though it professes to have taken place in 1608. I can only suppose that some years after, when he was incumbent, he found the entry missing, and supplied it on the recollection of friends.

Of Ffeleh, Ffaleh, or Felt, I find no mention. The only name even resembling it in sound being Phelps. Of Morgans there are plenty, but not Miles or James, as far as I can discover. I would hazard the guess that they may have been cousins of Rev. Richard B., as his mother's name was Jane Morgan. Of Jones.—Thomas Jones was one of the churchwardens in 1610—a numerous family, but rather difficult to identify, owing to the frequency of the name. Steevens or Stephens, several entries, but not William. I find, however, a register of burial of Elioner, the wife of William Stephens of Bettisley, 9th Sept. 1638. Hough I cannot find, but on several occasions Hughe, *e. g.*: Catherine Hughe wife of Jno. Hughe, Sept. 6, 1638.

These are all the names I can trace in the Chepstow registers. There may be some I have overlooked, as searching takes a long time in the old

writing; but I do not think I have slipped any of the important ones. Have you written to the Marshfields? The second one, near Chippenham, is not in Essex but in Wiltshire, near the borders of Gloucestershire. I have a friend there and if you like will have the registers searched for Pfelch, or as I sometimes pass Marshfield, near Cardiff, I would call there if you like me to do so. Machen, from which the Morgans came, of Lord Tredegar's family is close to the Monmouthshire Marshfield.

Do you know whether any of the Blinman party were from Tyddenham, about two miles from Chepstow? I only ask as there are traditions of an emigration to America. Buttington Tump and *Bunker's Hill* are there, the latter some think the original of the famous one.

(Then follow his notes as indicated in his letter.)

Records of the Blinman or Blynman Family,

in the Registers of Chepstow Church, and of others who may have accompanied Rev. Richard Blynman to America.

BLYNMAN. 1599. William Blynman and Maude Jones of Chepstow were solemnized the viiith Daye of January.

Maude the wife of Wm. Blynman died, and was buried July 30, 1599. A child of this marriage was baptized June 12th, 1599, was buried November 1599.

Ano d'mi. 1607. William Blynman and Jane Morgan were married the 13th of October. Richard, the son of William Blinman was baptized the 2nd day of february 1608.

Other children of the marriage were, Roger, baptized Sep. 23, 1610; Ann and Bridget baptized Sept. 4, 1613; Henry and Margaret, baptized August 9, 1612; Elizabeth, baptized August 13, 1620.

William Blinman was buried April 22, 1619.

JONES. Thomas Jones and Daniell Pearce, churchwardens, 1610.

Thomas, son of Thomas Jones the younger, baptized Nov. 25, 1615; Simon, baptized 2nd Feb. 1639. Also daughters Marie, Elizabeth, Elioner. Two other Thomas Joneses appear, the one a baker in 1630, the other in 1632.

MORGAN, a great many of the name, but not James or Miles. Rev. Rich. Blinman's mother was Jane Morgan.

STEEVENS or STEPHENS. Richard Steevens and Annie Tugwell, married 21st May 1610. Joane Steevens, baptized June 28th. 1627. Grace, daughter of Phillipp Steevens baptized 24 January 1632. Elioner, the wife of William Stephens of Bettisly buried 9th Sept. 1638.

HOUGH, not to be found, but Hughe. Catherine Hughe wife of John Hughe, buried Sept. 6th, 1638.

PHELPES. Margaret, the daughter of Thomas Phelpes, bapt. Jan. 3, 1639.

Yours faithfully,

G. J. HENSLEY.

SUMMARY OF DATA.

We have given all the available data that can be found on this side the Atlantic, probably, barring a few fugitive extracts of no great value or bearing on the question. Let us now summarize the

removed to Marshfield between the dates of birth of his two first children. This will also nearly tally with the dates of Blinman's removal.

X. "Obadiah Bruen filled the office of town clerk during the whole period of his stay in Gloucester; and when he left he carried the records with him, as it appears by a copy of an extract from them taken by his own hand after his removal to New Jersey."

He was living in Newark, N.J., in 1681. Search for this missing record should be made, by all means.

XI. The first *recorder* was Obadiah Bruen, who removed to New London in 1650, and carried with him the original record.

"Tradition says he took it," says Babson, "because the town would not pay for the book; but this seems improbable, considering that he left in another volume, in his own hand-writing, what we must conceive to have been the most important part of that which he carried away."—page 185.

XII. "There is nothing in the town-records about the erection of the first meeting house . . . erected by earlier inhabitants than Mr. Blynman and his company." "So long ago as in 1633," says Rev. E. Forbes in a commemoration sermon in Gloucester, in 1795, "the first settlers of this town consecrated a house for public worship." "It appears probable," continues Babson's History, "that a house of worship was erected soon after the incorporation of the town on or near the spot occupied by three successive buildings for this purpose, about half a mile north of the place indicated as the site of the first one." It is probable that "Master" Rashley was the pastor of this first primitive church. He was in Gloucester as early as 1640. "He was sometime member of the church in Boston; and in 1652 was officiating as minister at Bishop-Stoke, England."

In regard to the treatment that Mr. Blynman received at Gloucester, which led to his leaving for New London, Mr. Babson says feelingly (page 191):

"Unhappy dissensions drove Mr. Blynman from the scene of his first ministry in New England; and the ill-treatment he received from some of his people here may have hastened, if it did not induce, his departure from the town. His church was defuned; and he himself was scoffingly spoken of for what he had formerly delivered in the way of the ministry. But he appears to have worked undisturbed in the other fields of his labor, and to have lived in peaceful and harmonious relations with all. He was greeted with the loving salutations of eminent men; and a contemporary writer, (Johnson, in his "Wonder-working Providence") described him as a man 'of a sweet, humble, heavenly carriage,' who labored much against the errors of the times."

We have some further notes and gleanings, from Marshfield, Wales, and other places, which we may at some future time, when more fully developed, present to the REGISTER readers, but in the meantime should be glad to hear from any of them, in print or by letter, in more mature and thorough exploitation of this attractive theme.

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